



## The Department of Health instigates a Dengue Awareness Campaign

On Thursday, November 9 Vicente Krozendijk and Trevor van Gellecum, Director of the Department of Health called a press conference to bring to the public's attention the possibility of a dengue outbreak at the precautions needed to prevent it. When there is standing water in Aruba, the tropical climate makes an excellent breeding ground for the Egyptian Aedes mosquito, the carrier of the dengue virus, but diligence around the home can prevent an outbreak of this potentially fatal disease.

Mr. Krozendijk is the head of a department particularly dedicated to the control of the mosquito population on Aruba. He explained that since a heavy rainfall over the period of October 23-27 there is the possibility now, weeks later that the mosquito population will spike. The department regularly visits homes around the island, and over the last week they have found a drastic increase from the past 9 months in homes with mosquito breeding grounds were found. Examination of residences around Aruba one week after the recent rains showed a spike in the mosquito population by 6% in the areas of Noord and Baval and a jump of nearly 15% around Sero Colorado and Lago Heights.

Press members were given a sampling of educational materials that are being distributed to school children with a graphic depiction of the home and all the possible mosquito havens that could be found there. Teachers assign the children the task of policing their homes and returning to school with the results, which can then be passed on to the Department of Health. Arubabank was a contributor to the publishing of a coloring book that warns children of the dangers of dengue and how they can prevent it.

Mr. Krozendijk is also bringing the message to all citizens. He reminded the public to check around the home for areas where mosquitoes could breed. Everyone should check gutters, cisterns, open plant pots, and debris in the yard, as even a fractional amount of water collected provides a breeding ground. Old washing machines, toilets, and drains within the home should be checked, and underneath the refrigerator where water collects should be emptied and cleaned. Only emptying these vessels is not sufficient, they also need to be cleaned with soap as the mosquito eggs will stay dormant in dry weather, and then hatch when they are immersed in water.

The Department of Health also offers assistance if families maintain fountains in their gardens, or if they fear using poison around because of pets and children. The department has several stations around the island where they breed a fish that will feed on the mosquito eggs. These are free for anyone that wants them, and can live in fountains and keep it naturally free of mosquitoes.

For more information on the closest location to obtaining these fish or having someone come to check your home and garden for breeding grounds, call the Department of Disease Control at 582-3040 or 582-7298 or the Barcadera offices of Health Department, 585-5533/25/20 or head offices at 582-4200. They will be happy to provide colorful and informative printed matter on recognizing Dengue and its prevention for groups, schools and the public. Thursday's message was that Dengue can be a life threatening disease, but it is easily preventable with common sense and diligence, and attention must be placed on the problem before it actually becomes a problem.